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THE

USEFULNESS AND NECESSITY OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR CLERGYMEN,

A SERMON,

FROM MATT. V. 14.

PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY, ON THE 28. OF MAY, 1793.

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CHAPLAIN TO HIS MAJESTY, AND MINISTER OF INVERESK.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

OBJECTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON.

MAT. v. 14.

Ye are the light of the world.

SURPRISING as it may ſeem to be, there have been ſome who have thought, that a learned education was not neceſſary for Miniſters of the Goſpel. Nor has this been the opinion of enthuſiaſts alone; for not a few of the ſober minded and truly pious, have not been able to ſee the utility of the accompliſhments of learning to a Chriſtian paſtor. And even in our own days, it has been roundly aſſerted, "That "polite literature and elegant erudition

" are of no uſe to a clergyman, in the ex-
" erciſe of his miniſterial duties; and that
" they by no means enter, as an eſſential
" ingredient, into his paſtoral character."

One would have imagined, that the ſlighteſt view of the nature of the office, might have checked the riſe of ſuch ideas; for the Chriſtian paſtor has united in one, what was divided into two among the Gentiles and Jews. The pontiff and the philoſopher, the prieſt and the prophet of thoſe religions, form but one character in the Miniſter of the Goſpel; who not only preſides in the ſacred rites of our holy religion; but is likewiſe the teacher of its doctrines and precepts. Attention to the progreſs of Chriſtianity might have prevented this error: For though the twelve apoſtles of our Lord were choſen from among the rude and illiterate, to prevent ſuſpicion of impoſture, while the atteſtation of facts was the principal object; yet, when the Chriſtian faith was to be extended beyond the bounds of Judea,

Judea, the wiſdom of that Spirit, which preſided over the propagation of the goſpel made choice of St. Paul for that important work, a man bred at the feet of Gamaliel; that is, trained up in all the learning of the Jews, and likewiſe well acquainted with the language and philoſophy of the Greeks; as appears from his writings. The very inſtitutions of our own church, when adverted to, may ſerve to correct ſo abſurd an idea; for they have very anxiouſly guarded againſt the ignorance of clergymen, no leſs, than againſt their immorality, by the long courſe of ſtudy they have preſcribed to intrants, and thoſe ſtrict, and painful, and various pieces of trial, which they have ordained them to undergo, before they can be admitted into holy orders.

But as, notwithſtanding all theſe arguments, there are ſtill ſome who look back for an example to the firſt age, heedleſs of the different ſtates of the church, and of the world; and as uneducated pretenders

are too apt to catch the vulgar, I propoſe in this diſcourſe, with the bleſſing of God, to ſhew the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of a liberal education for clergymen; which if I am able to do, I ſhall illuſtrate one of the primary objects of this moſt beneficent and liberal inſtitution. I ſhall then,

I. Endeavour briefly to draw the outline of that education which befits a clergyman; or ſhew, wherein a liberal education may be ſuppoſed to conſiſt.

II. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the great advantages of ſuch an education.

III. I ſhall make application of the ſubject to this Society; who I hope will forgive me, if, emboldened by the duty they have aſſigned me, and preſuming too much perhaps on my age and experience, I ſhall offer inſtruction to their enlightned minds.

I. I am to point out wherein a liberal education may be ſaid to conſiſt; or draw the

the outlines of that plan of inſtruction that befits a clergyman.

It has often of late been the ſubject of doubt, whether or not the time that is ſpent in early youth, with ſo much labour and pains, to acquire the knowledge of the dead languages, is neceſſary in modern times, or is ever repaid by any equivalent advantages. But however plauſible the arguments may be, againſt this unneceſſary waſte of time as it is called, in ſome other lines of life, yet they cannot poſſibly be applied with juſtice to any of the learned profeſſions, eſpecially to that of the divine: For the ſacred books having been written in theſe languages, it would be unpardonable ignorance in the candidate for our profeſſion, to be unacquainted with them, or to be unable to ſtudy all that is comprehended in the wide compaſs of biblical knowledge. Or how are the ſublime beauties of ſcripture, from whence ſo much internal evidence is derived, and which is the ſacred armou-

ry

ry for the weapons of our warfare, to be felt or underſtood, if the ſtudent is ignorant of, or a mere novice in, the languages in which they are written! To be firmly eſtabliſhed himſelf in the belief of the ſcriptures, and to be able to communicate the foundations of that belief, in a clear and convincing manner; and ſtill more, to have a decided taſte for thoſe lofty ſtrains of the ſublime and the pathetic, which captivate the ſoul of man, and make his bowels to yearn within him, the Chriſtian teacher ſurely ought to be a maſter of the original languages.

Add to this, that the claſſics in two of the ancient tongues, have been handed down to us, with the conſenting voice of every age, as the moſt perfect models of compoſition; as the higheſt efforts of human genius; as exhibiting examples of good ſenſe and taſte; and even ſuch glowing pictures of virtue, as are congenial to the young and feeling mind, and make a more laſting impreſſion, than can be done by

by formal rules. No wonder then that claſſical learning ſhould be conſidered as an eſſential branch of a liberal education. So far ſhould we be from laying aſide the antients for the moderns, and abridging the labour of a learned education, that if there is any defect to be corrected in ours, it is that the youth are hurried too faſt into ſcience, before they have had time or maturity enough, to acquire perfect ſkill in thoſe languages, or to imbibe part of that ſpirit, to catch ſome portion of that celeſtial fire of genius, with which theſe ſuperior writings are compoſed.

And if our pupil ought to be a maſter of the claſſics, it follows of courſe, that he muſt be converſant in criticiſm and rhetoric, and every branch of the belles lettres, that he may fully comprehend the beauty and ſublimity of antient compoſition. Here it muſt be obſerved that our vernacular tongue muſt not be neglected. It was perhaps, by means of their cloſe attention to the ſtudy of their own languages,

guages, that the Greeks and Romans attained to that degree of perfection in them, which has made their writings of all kinds the admiration and the models of ſucceeding ages. We in particular, who ſpeak and write a provincial dialect of the national tongue, that not long ago was hardly underſtood in the capital, had much need to apply with the utmoſt diligence in early youth to acquire the pure idiom of that language in which we ſpeak and write; becauſe, in more advanced years, it will not only be a more difficult acquiſition, but may retain an inaccuracy, or a ſtiffneſs at leaſt, which are the marks of imperfection.

When this branch of erudition is finiſhed, or towards its concluſion, it will be proper to initiate our ſtudent in logic and the elements of mathematics, as not only neceſſary to exerciſe his mind in cloſe reaſoning, and thereby to ſtrengthen and improve his faculties, but to enable him to comprehend the ſublime ſcience of natural philoſophy in all its parts, when it is opened

opened up to his admiring mind: and eſpecially thoſe which in tracing the wonderful effects of power, wiſdom and goodneſs in the diverſified frame of nature, lead directly with the moſt ſplendid demonſtration to the firſt Cauſe, that ſupreme Intelligence which created and preſides over the whole.

Thus prepared, with his mind expanded to explore the works of God, our pupil may venture to look within himſelf; to ſtudy the ſcience of mind or ſpirit; to inveſtigate the intellectual, the active, and moral powers of man, the moſt myſterious and difficult of all the ſciences; that with faculties enlarged, and more infallible ſagacity, he may be able to ſearch to the bottom the principles of ethics and politics, as they are diſplayed with ſuch boundleſs diverſity, in the hiſtory of man either as an individual or in ſociety.

And now, well able to diſtinguiſh between truth and falſehood, between cer-

tainty and doubt, and to mark the line that divides their boundaries, he may venture to explore the ſublime regions of *Theology*, to trace what is comprehenſible by finite, in infinite Mind; to perceive the connexion between the viſible and inviſible world; to deduce natural and revealed religion from the ſame ſource; and, in the hiſtory of man and his moral agency in this life, to deſcry his future deſtiny in the next.

And here commences our ſtudent's moſt arduous taſk, for which all the other parts of his education are chiefly preparatory; I mean the ſtudy of Theological Learning. To this he muſt for ſeveral years of his maturer age, devote his moſt ſerious attention and aſſiduous labour; for it is from the inſtruction he ſhall receive, and the knowledge he ſhall acquire, in this important courſe, that he can be properly furniſhed for the defence of revealed religion, and for the refutation of ſceptical cavils: that he can become thoroughly maſter

ſter of the hiſtory and doctrines of the Reformation, and be able to eſtabliſh the great principles of Chriſtian faith, againſt all heretical opinions. Howſoever great a proficient our pupil may be in claſſical knowledge, or however much an adept in philoſophy, yet, if he is deficient in theological erudition, he will fall ſhort of what is expected in his profeſſion, his proper work will be always laborious to him, and a degree of ſlightneſs will be attached to his character as a divine, which may derogate from his uſefulneſs. But on this part of education, though in itſelf ſo important, I need not enlarge, as its neceſſity is ſo obvious and inconteſtible; but ſhall proceed to mention others that may be overlooked.

Of theſe let me recommend as a branch of politics, the conſtitution and laws of his country, as a moſt neceſſary part of his ſtudy. It were well too, if to the general knowledge of human nature, our pupil could add ſome *knowledge of the world;*

not

not that which terminates in ſelfiſhneſs and cunning, nor that which may qualify him to be a ringleader in the vices of the age, but that knowledge of the world which is ſo needful to induce politeneſs of behaviour, and thoſe agreeable manners, which taking riſe in benevolence and charity, muſt nevertheleſs receive their form from the practice of ſociety, from converſation and habits with the elegant and refined.

In antient phraſeology, the ſcholar and the gentleman were ſynonimous terms, and were conſidered as inſeparable. In modern language, this has ſometimes been unfortunately changed, for the name of gentleman has been as much a term of obloquy among the grave as that of pedant has been of contempt among the gay; by which means the bad qualities only of each, have been generally annexed to the characters, and a gentleman by the multitude has too often been underſtood to be merely a perſon illiterate, idle, and miſchievous,

chievous; and a pedant acknowledged to be learned, and heavy, and rude. This laſt character on account of a variety of circumſtances was long aſcribed to the clergy of this church, and they were then not unjuſtly afraid of the appellation of gentlemen, as with the unthinking vulgar of all ranks, *that* implied licentious manners.

It is high time to change this perverſion of words and ideas; and the change is begun: for an accompliſhed gentleman is now underſtood to mean every thing praiſeworthy in a character, to comprehend all the qualities that attract the eſteem, or attach the affections of mankind, learning and virtue, agreeable talents and poliſhed manners. And the opinion of the public, no longer reſtrained by Gothic manners and the excluſive claims of the ſuperior orders, but equal and free as their laws, is now ready to give every man his due, in proportion *to the value of* his talents and accompliſhments.

To

To make the world of eaſier acceſs to our ſtudent than it formerly was, the virtues and vices have reſumed their places again, after having been long deranged by the diſorderly hands of ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm. It is no longer a crime to be well-bred, nor ridiculous to be learned. The amuſements of the gay are not held to be profane, nor the ſtudies of the grave to be abſurd or uſeleſs. The muſes have replaced the graces in their train, and recovered their wonted attractions. But if hypocriſy has pulled off her diſguiſe, and the catalogue of ſins extends no farther now than to things prohibited by the law and the goſpel, ſurely the more liberty the manners of the age allows our ſtudent in things lawful or indifferent, ſo much leſs temptation has *he to overleap the bounds of what is forbidden*, and follow faſhionable diſſipation; ſo much the ſtronger inducement, to preſerve that profeſſional decorum which becomes his dignity. But why ſhould I dwell longer on this imperfect delineation? The luminous method of inſtruction

inſtruction, preſcribed in our univerſities, and executed with ſo much honour and ſucceſs, is a far better guide than any imperfect ſketch of mine can be. What I mean to inculcate is this, That the line of education for clergymen, cannot be too extenſive or liberal, and that of the three learned profeſſions, ours can leaſt admit of a limited or narrow ſyſtem of inſtruction.

The profeſſion of the law, though on many accounts the leading profeſſion in this country, is not neceſſarily converſant in any but outward things, the property of man, and the reſtraints of law on his actions. The ſtudy of the law and its acceſſories, is therefore all that is neceſſary in this laborious profeſſion. The ſame thing may be ſaid of the medical art, whoſe object is the bodies of men. But the buſineſs of thoſe of the clerical profeſſion, is with the mind of man, and therefore their preparatory knowledge is of the moſt boundleſs extent, embracing the whole circle of

ſcience,

ſcience, all the objects and operations of intellect, and all the objects and motions of the will and the paſſions; for each and every one of them, may occaſionally ſerve as uſeful inſtruments in the *Chriſtian orator's vocation*; which is, by enlightning the minds, and purifying the paſſions of men, to make them wiſe and virtuous and happy. *Ye are the light of the world.*

Add to this, that the operations and effects of the two other profeſſions are at an end and ceaſe forever, when the tenure of all earthly goods is cancelled by the hand of death, and when the body is laid in the grave; but thoſe of the Chriſtian philoſopher, while they tend to make the rich man *happy in benevolence*, and the poor ſerene and *contented with hope*, and the ſick and afflicted patient *magnanimous* through faith, even in this life, provide for them all in the life to come, *what eye has not ſeen, nor ear heard, what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, joy unſpeakable and everlaſting and full of glory.* But I come

In the *ſecond* place to point out the great advantages of ſuch an education; and here I ſhall be confined to three particulars, as it reſpects a clergyman's perſonal character; as it reſpects his fitneſs for the office; as it may prove ornamental to the ſociety.

1*ſt*, I ſhall conſider the advantage of a liberal education, as it reſpects a clergyman's perſonal character.

Mankind may be divided into the educated and uneducated, learned and ignorant, wiſe and fooliſh; and it is obvious to which diviſion the preference muſt be given. For though it does not neceſſarily follow, that all the learned are wiſe, and all the ignorant fooliſh; yet, in the opinion of mankind, there is a marked ſuperiority attached to the former. *Ye ſhall be as Gods*, ſaid Satan to our firſt parents, *when he temptedthem to taſte of the tree of knowledge.* Riches and poverty, the moſt obvious of all diviſions, mark the lines of

power and of dependance; but for reſpect and authority in all the important affairs of life, for advice in perplexity, for counſel in danger, for every office of weight and conſideration in human ſociety, the advantages of a liberal education have ever been acknowledged. *When the city is beſieged, the wiſe man is reſorted to, even though he ſhould be poor.* Eccles.

In the common intercourſe of life, the educated man muſt every moment feel the ſuperiority he poſſeſſes, not in the outward marks of reſpect, which are frequently denied him, but in the aſcendant he perceives he has over the minds of other men, the moſt flattering of all the qualities and talents a man can poſſeſs; becauſe it is derived from no foreign circumſtance, but ſolely from perſonal merit; becauſe it is the homage which nature has preſcribed the weak in intellect ſhall pay to the ſtrong. It has ſometimes been queſtioned whether or not the moſt conſummate general, the hero in war, in common opinion

nion the moſt ſplendid of all characters, ought to be accounted of talents ſuperior to the philoſopher who enlightens the world? Of their comparative uſefulneſs to mankind there has been no doubt: Could the queſtion be ſolved by the temper and conduct of kings and heroes themſelves, it would be decided in favour of the latter; for we ſhall find that they have not always been ſatisfied with the fulneſs of their own qualities and glory, but have often languiſhed on their thrones, for that kind of celebrity which belongs to the works of ſages and philoſophers. Not contented that their actions were to fill *the hiſtoric page*, and their renown to animate *the poet's lays*, they have ſometimes ſtrove, with vain emulation, to excel them in their ſeveral arts.

But not only in public opinion, but in his own ſelf-government, is that ſtrength of character which is derived from a liberal education of the greateſt advantage to a miniſter of this church. 'Tis in his

conſcious ſuperiority of wiſdom and virtue, that he is able to maintain his dignity, in that nice and difficult ſituation in which he is placed. To mix daily with the people, and yet be uninfected with their manners; to hold the middle courſe, between the auſterity that diſguſts, and the facility that breeds contempt; to have all the nice feelings of an elegant and enlightned mind, and yet to bear the ſhocks to which it is liable, and be denied moſt of the gratifications for which it creates a taſte. To be conſtantly ſtriving with narrow circumſtances in the midſt of a commercial ſtate without hope of improving them, and yet to preſerve equanimity, and maintain a dignity of conduct, ſufficient to draw the reſpect that is due to his ſtation:—Theſe are parts of that arduous undertaking, which miniſters engage in, when they enter into this church; which never could be ſuſtained, but for that elevation of mind and force of character, which is acquired by a liberal education.

'Tis by this means that he is ſelf-ſatisfied, even in the midſt of the moſt trying circumſtances that can befal him; that repoſing himſelf on the enjoyments of a philoſophic mind, he can calmly bear the neglect, or even the contumely of the world; and, retiring to contemplation and ſolitude, can content himſelf with the conſolations of learning, the exerciſes of piety, and the duties of his charge.

A 2*d* advantage ariſing from the liberal education of clergymen, is, that it fits them for their profeſſion.

Perſonal merit in ſome degree qualifies a man for every thing; and he who brings a ſtrenuous, an elevated, and enlarged mind into any profeſſion, is moſt likely to ſhine in it. Yet there is a certain meetneſs and fitneſs of talents and profeſſions for each other, without which excellency cannot be attained.

It was taught by the ancients that the good

good and virtuous man alone was qualified to ſhine as an orator in their public aſſemblies. How much more clearly muſt it be underſtood, that he who is to teach virtue to others, muſt himſelf be eminently virtuous; that he who is to inſtruct mankind in knowledge, muſt himſelf be fully inſtructed? Both are the fruits of a liberal education; and both are neceſſary in the clerical profeſſion. For though proof ſufficient to convince the hearers of any truth may be at the command of the intelligent; yet the power of affecting the paſſions of men, and of conveying irreſiſtable and laſting impreſſions of morality to their minds, belongs only to him, who to ſuperior knowledge, joins the *virtues of the heart.* And though learning and virtue are not inſeparable companions, yet who ſo likely to acquire that divine quality, or to improve it, when already beſtowed by the framer of the human ſoul, as the man who having trod the whole circle of ſcience, with enlarged views, has diſcovered *what is good and what is evil;* what we ought to ſeek after,

after, and to ſhun; how contemptible all outward things are; and that the dignity and happineſs of human nature conſiſts in the exerciſe of its talents and virtues? For the pious and virtuous man, whoſe mind is enlarged and invigorated by the moſt extenſive range of knowledge, as he muſt have nobler views of all the objects of piety and virtue than others, cannot fail to poſſeſs all the feelings that belong to them with greater poignancy, and perform all their acts with greater energy, than can be done by the untaught and illiterate.

As the clergyman's profeſſion is the only one that is entirely ſet aſide and devoted to the ſervice of mankind, he had much need to have a double portion of diſintereſtedneſs, and the love of his ſpecies; neither of which can be acquired without that high nobility of ſoul, and ample capacity of heart, which is the portion of thoſe who are deeply converſant with all the liberal arts and ſciences, and have the moſt intimate knowledge of the hiſtory of man.

And

And yet the firſt is neceſſary to make his labours acceptable and efficacious among thoſe for whom they are employed; and the ſecond is neceſſary to make them eaſy and pleaſing to himſelf.

But beſides the general fitneſs for his important office, which is the fruit of a liberal education, there are particular parts of it, for which our candidate could not be tolerably well qualified, without this previous courſe of erudition. The inſtruction of the young or ignorant, for inſtance, the viſitation of the ſick, the giving advice to the perplexed, comfort to the afflicted, rebuke to the profligate, which are his daily miniſtrations, how could they be performed, conſidering the infinite variety of characters, unleſs the Chriſtian paſtor perfectly underſtood the intricate ſtructure of the human mind, knew all its ſecret receſſes, and ſubtle wiles, all the ſprings of the paſſions and motives of action?

But farther, when we conſider his function

tion as a Chriſtian orator, in what point can it be viewed, in which the advantages of a liberal education are not ſtrikingly manifeſt? In the courſe of his miniſtrations there is almoſt no ſubject on which he may not have occaſion to ſpeak. Univerſal knowledge muſt then be ever at his command; ſince he cannot ſpeak to advantage of what he does not thoroughly know.

His intimate acquaintance with the holy ſcriptures, which contain the ſyſtem of doctrines, and the code of laws to which he muſt conſtantly appeal, which are full of examples both of a public and private nature, and are particularly enriched with the goſpel of our Lord, the hiſtory of his life and death, and the propagation of our faith; the knowledge of theſe alone, muſt ultimately prove a rich proviſion for the Chriſtian teacher: for it is chiefly to facilitate his juſt and accurate diſcernment of the ſenſe and deſign of thoſe books, that he has made ſuch a laborious preparation.

His knowledge of the art of reaſoning will enable our intrant into holy orders, to define and to prove with accuracy, and to unravel all the intricacies of ſophiſtry. His ſkill in rhetoric will teach him to form his orations in ſuch a manner, as beſt to anſwer the purpoſe of eloquence, which is perſuaſion. His being an adept in the ſcience of ethics, his perfect acquaintance with the ſtructure of the human mind, will direct him to point the ſcope of his diſcourſes, ſo as to ſway the paſſions of men, the ſprings of their conduct. Hiſtory will furniſh him with facts and illuſtrations: and even poetry itſelf will be ſubſervient to his purpoſe; becauſe a great part of ſcripture is poetical, and becauſe the lofty diction and figures of poetry have a near relation to thoſe of oratory.

In ſhort, the mind of the Chriſtian teacher being fully ſtored with all ſorts of knowledge before he begins to compoſe or ſpeak, it will not be difficult for him to be a maſter in his art. Without this original fund

of

ſcience, even conſiderable talents will prove deficient, and genius itſelf ſeem barren and deſerted. The moſt painful preparation will produce diſcourſes meagre and jejune, or at beſt ſplendid patchwork of ill-conſorted parts. Whereas they who have laid up in ſtore an ample fund of many years preparation, can at all times, without any ſeeming effort, ſend forth from their never-failing fountain of knowledge, ſuch copious ſtreams, as ſhall enrich and fertilize wherever they flow.

But not only does this general preparation of our Chriſtian orator render eaſy and effectual his daily labours; but every part of a liberal education is occaſionally of very particular advantage to a miniſter. I ſhall give an inſtance or two of ſuch as appear moſt problematical.

Of what uſe, it may be ſaid, is the knowledge of the world, and elegant accompliſhments to a clergyman? They are not neceſſary in the exerciſe of his vocation; and they

they tend rather to raiſe averſion in the lower orders, and to excite ridicule in the higher. But this objection is taken from what is too often to be ſeen, *the affectation of* thoſe qualities, and not the reality. For the true knowledge of the world, and genuine accompliſhments, muſt always appear in ſo ſimple a form, as not to offend, but to conciliate. They are a crown and ornament to all other talents and qualities, and theſe lead the poſſeſſor to produce them with ſuch modeſt propriety as to overcome the moſt prejudiced. The preacher *of righteouſneſs* muſt be converſant with men of all ranks, if poſſible to gain their reſpect and good will, and reconcile them to the truth: and that kind of demeanour is likely to be moſt ſucceſsful, the prime quality of which is, that it cannot *offend.*

It is our duty at all times with our utmoſt addreſs, to draw the attention and countenance of the upper ranks of life to the duties of religion; and never was it more ſo than at preſent; when men's

principles

principles of every kind are affloat, and when the angel with his warning voice ſeems to proclaim, *Woe to the inhabitants on earth!* It is in the nature of man when he is in high proſperity to dread no reverſe of fortune; when the age he lives in is highly enlightned, to believe that an æra of darkneſs can never return. But we have only to look back into the annals of the world to be undeceived. *Look back, did I ſay?* We have only to look at the preſent moment, to our neighbouring ſtate, to be convinced that æras of indifference and fanaticiſm, of infidelity and ſuperſtition, are not ſo diſtant from each other as we apprehend. And we ſhould in ſuch a ſtate, never ceaſe *to warn with ſtrongeſt emphaſis*, thoſe whom it chiefly concerns, that if they whoſe ſituation entitles them to *keep the lead*, in the rational and manly, and moſt benevolent ſyſtem of faith and worſhip which we now enjoy, ſhould neglect it; the time may be at hand, *when they who in all things ought to follow*, may ſeize thoſe reins which drop from feeble and indolent hands, and

realize

realize again in this favoured iſle, the fury and barbarity and darkneſs of former ages.

Of what uſe, it may be ſaid, is political knowledge to a clergyman? That ſeems entirely foreign to the duties of his function. And it muſt be confeſſed, that to make men pious and virtuous, through the *knowledge of the truth as it is in Chriſt Jeſus*, is the great object of our miniſtry; for ſincere and faithful Chriſtians will of courſe be good ſubjects, obedient to the laws, and reſpectful to magiſtrates. But beſides *that*, it muſt be obſerved, that we are placed in the middle between the higher and lower ranks of men, and as an eſtabliſhed church, are entruſted by our country with the charge of forming the minds of our people, to a due ſenſe of the bleſſings of that good government, which we have ſworn to maintain and defend; to inſtruct them in the nature of their rights and privileges, as well as their duties; and create in them a reverence and attachment to that conſtitution by which they hold

their

their religion and liberty, and all that is dear to them. Beſides this neceſſary duty in peaceable times, a miniſter of this church ought to be well enlightened, and firmly eſtabliſhed indeed, in his political principles, that he may be able to ſtand faſt himſelf, and to confirm his flock on the riſing of *ſuch lowring clouds of ſedition*, as of late threatened this guilty land with univerſal ruin. Had the clergy been uninformed, or diſſaffected, or even lukewarm on that occaſion, God only knows what a dreadful ſtorm we might have now been encountering! *Bleſſed be his name! who hath delivered us: by whoſe mercy it is, that the proud waters have not overwhelmed our ſouls!*

A 3*d* advantage to be derived from the liberal education of clergymen is, that it may prove ornamental to the ſociety.

Beſides the character of individuals, there are characters annexed to whole bodies of men which procure them the eſteem, or

fix

fix on them the contempt, of the world. An ignorant or immoral clergy could not fail to be diſregarded. Church courts that ſhould be variable in their deciſions, and inconſiſtent in their meaſures, could never acquire or deſerve the confidence of the public. Let us be thankful that the members of our church are held in general to be as learned and pious, and virtuous and orderly, as any eccleſiaſtics in the world. And our ſupreme court has juſtly obtained a due authority over the minds of the people, on account of the uniformity of its decrees, and the wiſdom of its proceedings.

But amidſt the luminous ſphere of our eccleſiaſtical heaven, there are conſtellations that ſurpaſs the reſt of the ſtars in ſplendor and beauty; which enlighten at once and adorn. What branch of literature is there, in which ſome of the miniſters of this church have not excelled? What ſubject of fine writing is there, in which they do not, as authors, ſtand in the foremoſt ranks

ranks, which is a prouder boaſt than all the wealth and ſplendor of a hierarchy? time would fail me ſhould I attempt to enumerate the works of the members of this church, who have ſucceſsfully endeavoured to enlighten the world in almoſt every branch of knowledge.

Not to mention treatiſes in defence of Chriſtianity, or learned diſſertations on ſacred criticiſm, or eloquent illuſtrations of every branch of Chriſtian doctrine and morals, which more immediately belong to the clergy;—Who are they who have wrote the moſt excellent hiſtories antient and modern? They are clergymen of this church*. Who have given the cleareſt delineation of the human underſtanding, and the moſt ſublime ſyſtem of ethics that the world has ever ſeen? They are clergymen of this church†. Who has written the beſt ſyſtem of rhetoric in our tongue, and exemplified

* Drs Robertſon, Fergusſon, Watſon, Henry.

† Drs Reid, Fergusſon, Campbell, Gerard.

plified it by his moſt eloquent orations*? A clergyman of this church. Who have excelled in ſome of the higheſt parts of poetry †? Who have been and ſtill are the moſt illuſtrious philoſophers, mathematicians, and aſtronomers of their times, or have excelled in natural hiſtory, or have given the moſt uſeful leſſons in agriculture, the firſt of all the neceſſary arts ‡? They have been clergymen of this church.

There were no end in diſplaying the laurels ſo juſtly won by the members of our body. And were I to point out the ſons of the clergy §, who ſhine as ſtars of the firſt magnitude in this conſtellation of genius, which adorns our literary ſphere, I might be ſuppoſed to excite envy perhaps, which I would anxiouſly ſhun; but, ſurely I would encourage and excite the

* Dr Blair.

† Home and Wilkie.

‡ Leechman, Stewart, Playfair, Greenfield, Finlayſon, Walker, Dickſon, &c. &c.

§ Robertſon, Ferguſon, Campbell, M'Laurin, M'Pherſon, Brydone, Stewart, Hardie, Dickſon, Mickle, Thomſon, Armſtrong, Richardſon, Simpſon, Hutcheſon, &c.

the minds of this ſociety, to proſecute with the ardour of hope, that moſt liberal deſign which they have ſo happily begun.

Thus it is that the liberal education of clergymen proves ornamental to the whole ſociety, and ſupplies in ſome degree the want of wealth and dignities. Hence, it is, that we are of ſome name in diſtant regions, and that our order ſheds ſome rays of glory on our native land. We are poor indeed, but we are rich in the beſt goods a church can poſſeſs, in the learning, the manners, and character of its members Ours. is a ſplendid poverty, it is the *paupertas fœcunda virorum.*

Thus have I fulfilled my purpoſe, which was to ſhew the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of a liberal education for clergymen.

Let it not be forgot however, that this education with all the advantages I have aſcribed to it, muſt be underſtood, as deriving

riving all the good that attends it, from the bleſſing of God, and the influence of his grace. For, though this influence is generally conſidered as chiefly applicable to virtue, and the power of leading holy lives, while we aſcribe all other talents and accompliſhments ſolely to ourſelves and our own efforts, yet the leaſt reflection will lead us to arrange theſe alſo under the divine agency. *In him we live, and move, and have our being*, without exception, or limitation; and we ſhall find that in all ages and nations, any extraordinary ſkill in the uſeful arts, or any excellent knowledge of the ſciences, has been attributed to the immediate inſpiration of God.

I have only now in the third place, to make application of what I have ſaid to this Society.

Is it then true, that a liberal education, in the moſt extenſive ſenſe, is of the greateſt advantage to the clergy of this church? Then

Then may I congratulate and extol this ſociety, for having undertaken a work, that may ultimately prove of ſo much utility to our country. For, although your views are not limited to a ſingle profeſſion, yet, the families of clergymen, having been long the moſt fruitful ſeminaries of the church, it is not improbable that ſhe may chiefly reap the benefit of your benevolence and care. For alas! without your foſtering hand, how few of them will, in future, be able to procure even that education which the rules of the church ſo wiſely require!

When the Preſbyterian church eſcaped from the hand of perſecution, and was reſtored to the wiſhes of the people of this country at the revolution, ſhe partook of the narrow principles and illiberal ſpirit, which pervaded the minds of men in that tumultuous age. The ſudden demand for candidates to fill up every charge, obliged her to receive many, who were but half educated, of low habits and vulgar manners. Popular elections continued for

ſome

ſome time to prolong the evil, and the clergy were neglected, if not deſpiſed by the ſuperior orders. At length, the intrants of the church, having been relieved from the fear of being rejected, for thoſe very qualities that adhere to a liberal education, began to avail themſelves of their acquired talents and accompliſhments. Among the firſt, was that diſtinguiſhed perſon, * who for ſo long a period, filled the place where I now ſtand, who ventured to leave the beaten tract of dry ſcholaſtic preaching, and enforced the morality of the goſpel as well as its doctrines, with much ability and elocution. This Tillotſon of the church of Scotland, as he has been called, was followed, and even excelled by ſome of his juniors, in the art of compoſition and eloquence, which he lived to ſee and to rejoice in, with the moſt cordial exultation.

Then began that æra of ability and genius, which I have already mentioned, wherein

* Dr George Wiſhart.

wherein ſo many members of this church have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the annals of literature, and almoſt every individual in his ſeveral ſphere, has diſplayed the effects of a liberal and learned education. How happy is it for thoſe, far in the vale of years, who have ſo long ſuſtained the honour and dignity of their profeſſion, whoſe evening was clouded with the forebodings of the falling ſtate of the church, that they can now look with glad preſage, to this moſt benevolent and generous inſtitution, which promiſes to prolong the day of light and liberality to our order.

Their hopes I truſt are not too ſanguine; for the deſign of this ſociety has already drawn the attention of our *moſt gracious ſovereign*, whoſe watchful eye is upon every corner of his dominions, to preſerve and extend the reign of liberty and happineſs among his people. His Majeſty's approbation was firſt expreſſed, by his grant of a royal charter, by which

you

you are formed into a corporate body; which was ſoon after inforced by a moſt liberal donation. His illuſtrious example will be followed. For, whatever marks of degeneracy may belong to this age, a want of munificence is none of them, nor a low ſtandard of virtue; elſe the king on the throne would not be ſo much loved and revered.

Need I addreſs myſelf to you, my Reverend Brethren, who are ſo deeply intereſted in thoſe who are to reap the benefit of this humane and beneficent inſtitution, which along with relief, however, carries with it a proof of your indigent condition. The commencement of the wonderful progreſs of this country in induſtry and wealth, is within the remembrance of the youngeſt among you. You have contributed to this national proſperity, by thoſe excellent leſſons of ſobriety and virtue, of induſtry and œconomy, which you have given your people, and by the example that you have ſet before them. All ranks

have

have profited by it, but you. The proprietor has more than doubled his rent, the tradeſman his ſtock, the huſbandman and labourer his profits and wages. You alone remain in general with the ſame ſcanty allowance, which was ſettled on you almoſt a century ago: Which then indeed bore ſome reaſonable proportion to the ſtate of the country, but is now depreciated to one third of the value it had then. Your good conduct, has likewiſe had no ſmall ſhare in preſerving the peace of the country, as well as in promoting its proſperity, while it has raiſed your reputation, as high as that of any clergy in Europe. What recompence might have been expected for your uniform and ſteady virtue?

You wiſh for no more, than is abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve the credit of your order. You wiſh to be put as nearly as may be into the ſame proportional ſtate, in reſpect to the advanced opulence of your country, as was held by your predeceſſors, for ſome time after the Preſbyterian church

was reſtored. Preferment and rewards are out of the queſtion. Our eſtabliſhment admits of ſo few that they need hardly be mentioned. But ſet apart as you are, and devoted to the public welfare and happineſs, and precluded from every lucrative employment, you ſurely ought to be raiſed above a degrading ſtate of poverty. You are entitled to a competency, that you may perform your duty with due freedom of ſpirit; that you may occaſionally exerciſe the evangelical virtues of hoſpitality and almſgiving; that you may give your children the rudiments of a liberal education, and, having nothing elſe to beſtow, may leave them the credit and protection of your good name.

If this is denied you, aſcribe it not to the want of countenance from thoſe who hold the executive government of this country, for they have expreſſed their favour for you, in the moſt unequivocal terms. Aſcribe it not to the ſupreme court of law; for, governed by a manly and liberal

beral ſpirit, that body muſt often regret that their powers are too much limited. Surely you cannot aſcribe it to the ariſtocracy of this country; whoſe generous minds, expanding with their fortunes, muſt prompt them to impart to you ſome ſmall ſhare of their accumulated wealth, for your faithful ſervices, and to preſerve you in the capacity of ſerving them more. Surely, warned by the danger to which they were ſo lately expoſed, they muſt wiſh to unite you, as much as poſſible, to themſelves, and to tie cloſer the bond of amity between you; and, foreſeeing the future in the paſt, muſt wiſely provide againſt the next evil day, when the demon of ſedition ſhall rage once more, *and the people again imagine a vain thing*.

Whatever ſhall happen, conſole yourſelves with this, that the public opinion is ſtrongly in your favour, and that as there is no government ſo much ſwayed by opinion as ours, if you preſerve your character for purity of manners, and importance

portance to your country, ſooner or later ſhe muſt do you juſtice. In the mean time, ſhould any of you be cut off in the mid-time of your days, which is frequently the lot of the beſt of men, you are not ſo forlorn as many of your predeceſſors of late have been, for you may comfort yourſelves with the pleaſing proſpect that is opened up to you, in the paternal care and guardianſhip of this moſt benevolent ſociety. *Whom may the God of the fatherleſs proſper and bleſs!*

Let me conclude by addreſſing myſelf to the contributors at large, and all who encourage this moſt laudable undertaking. If there is any truth in what I have repreſented, you have the ſatisfaction and the honour of contributing to preſerve, in ſome degree of credit, an order of men moſt uſeful and neceſſary for the ſupport of religion, of morals, and good order in the ſtate. To you it will be owing that a miniſter of the goſpel, who has laboured all his life for the good of ſouls, and who,

conſcious

conſcious of diligence and fidelity in his Maſter's work, has nothing to ſadden the evening of his days, but anxious fears for thoſe he ſhall leave behind him, may now meet the laſt hour with unconcern, becauſe his children if they are worthy, may become the adopted children of this Society; will be treated with all the prudent care, if not with the fond partiality of paternal affection, and with more wiſdom and providence than they could have ſhewn, will be ſafely uſhered into the world.

You underſtand the full force of that ſaying of our Lord's, *It is more bleſſed to give than to receive.* You look forward with joy to that great day when all you have done ſhall meet with that kind interpretation from your Redeemer and Judge, *Foraſmuch as you have done it unto the leaſt of theſe you have done it unto me.* You have diſcovered the chief good. You have learned to anticipate celeſtial joys; for charity is heaven begun in the heart of man, and paradiſe itſelf is only the conſummation of charity. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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